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ABSTRACT

Experience in running international seminars is synthesized in this paper to provide guidelines on the use of case studies in introducing innovations in educational management. For purposes of international meetings, case studies offer universally available data and material in a form easily assimilated by delegates with varying linguistic abilities. The paper discusses problems in writing case studies, ways of giving international perspectives to national events, and case study types, issues, and analysis.

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The Use of Case Studies in International Training Programmes for the
Management of Educational Change

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Introduction

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

This study originates in the experience of INTEC in running a number of international seminars concerned with the management of innovation in education in which case studies were a major feature. Case Studies have a long history in management education but they are by no means the only way of introducing management ideas. In this book we discuss the reasons case studies were chosen for our purposes, the kind of case study we used and some of the problems encountered.

But first of all we should be clear as to what we mean by a 'case study' or a 'case'. A case may be used as a means of research or investigation in which instance the term refers to a critical and/or analytical account of an organisation or a phase in the life of an organisation. Several cases may be used in order to generate hypotheses, or conclusions, models or explanations, clarifications or taxonomies. In this context the case is essentially a research tool. The use of cases in teaching is somewhat different. For teaching purposes a case or case study is a presentation of selected data on which students work in order to develop their understanding of the processes at work in the organisation or organisations under examination. In neither teaching nor research need a case be comprehensive (if indeed such were possible) for the purpose is to uncover critical factors - in one case to understand something new, in the other to understand theories already current. There can be no such thing as a complete case but nor is there any need for such a thing.

The use of case studies in an international setting is almost a

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forced choice in the interests of safety and fairness. The linguistic ability of members on international courses can never be known beforehand and the methods of selecting participants is so uncontrolled that member experience will vary enormously. Hence the case presents a means of providing security for both members and organisers - for members because they have something they can take their time over, and for the organisers in that they can always fall back on universally available data and material. Furthermore, the preparation of the case material itself ensures that the organising team always has a point of reference in determining the progress of the seminar or conference.

I The Rationale for Case Studies

A. The Case Studies themselves.

Cases do not write themselves. Each case study represents the perspectives and selection of the case writers and this will always be in some measure (even in large measure) subjective and reflecting personal interests, biases and even prejudgments. But cases are not complete descriptions of organisations or innovative happenings in an existential world; they are descriptions which illustrate some predetermined facets of organisational life. For instance, one case study is written to illustrate why an innovation occurs; another to illustrate blocks to progress, yet another to show how one aspect of organisational life dominates others. It is probably impossible to write a case study without in some way predetermining most of the issues to be raised even though critics may be able to raise additional issues. The major composing problem for the writer is how to decide what to put into the case study and what to leave out since clearly he cannot put everything in (even if he wanted to) and his decisions about what to leave out may involve the exclusion of what to some readers are critical issues. In the end, only experience in writing cases and using them with specific groups of readers can tell the writer what is likely to prove useful and what is likely to prove superfluous. If he adopts the teacher role, then he can take a pedagogic stance on what he believes should come out of discussion. (When the presenter has not himself written the case he may miss the original purposes of the material).

Two major hurdles in writing (international) case studies are in firstly providing enough background and explanation, and secondly to use terminology which is meaningful and of the national context of the

case (e.g. not to translate the Norwegian "gymnaso" by the English grammar school). In our experience even the term 'elementary education' provided cultural problems.

It might well be assumed that case studies are based on real situations and an historically correct sequence of events. But there are significant problems over 'reality' and 'sequence', since almost all case-writing is based upon memories and perceptions collected at best at secondhand. Human memory is inclined to misremember the sequence of events; human perception to misread what actually occurred. This being so, the case writer must inevitably add a dimension of 'fantasy' or 'creativity' to the compilation and it might well be argued that case studies are the better for being written imaginatively rather than coldly and clinically. So that the case is manageable and readable, it must be fairly short because people just do not read lengthy material and even fewer people read anything that is sent out before a course actually commences. At the best, the process of selecting may be considered a means of highlighting problems; at its worst as a means of omitting problems which are important.

It is the hope that case studies will provide a common ground of experience to people who come from different backgrounds and with different experiences. Certainly for international audiences the case study is probably the only means of ensuring that the common base is, at least theoretically, commonly understood though there is nevertheless a strong tendency for most people to interpret what is going on in other countries in terms of what is happening in their own without understanding the differences and looking only for similarities.

Because people bring with them so much of their own experience (and their own interpretation of their own experience) the first barrier to using a case is that of individual preconceptions. It is tempting to

...that this can be overcome by providing 'raw data' but in practice this is no help because many people find raw data more difficult to interpret correctly or appropriately than handling overt opinions and clear biases in the case presentation. The problem is not only semantic but there is the emotional response to information that is puzzling or difficult and the need to translate it into known forms - the forms of experience to one's own country. In spite of this, we believe that the case discussion can be thrown open to personal and national prejudices and interpretation and with careful guidance the issues can be shown to be challenging both in themselves and by comparison with national interpretations. Thus while personal perceptions can be a grave weakness, there can be a very important bonus in interpretation when carefully and sympathetically handled.

While still regarding the case study as being a personal interpretation of the writer, the case itself must contain facts or near-facts which can be examined in some way more objectively by readers in discussion. There is a way in which facts and interpretations because they are embedded in the case study must be examined in relationship to their context and the value to the international study group is that the exercise of checking out the relationship between facts and events becomes a significant part of the clarification process and individual understanding. In any case, the case study enables discussion to centre on the case rather than vague ideas of 'training', 'management', 'innovation', 'reform' or whatever.

We have used no cases which could be considered as international in themselves. All case studies have been based on mono-national events. The implication of this has meant that the writers have had to bear in mind the needs of an international readership which has led in some instances to the cases being presented in a pedestrian and oversimple way. But this has only exceptionally occurred and for the most part the international readership has been a spur to examination and clarity, so that nationals have been forced into raising questions about their own innovation and indeed about the educational process in their own country. The case study for international presentation requires a much deeper probing of assumptions than a study for compatriots. Sometimes, of course, presenting countries have been remarkably uncritical about their innovations, often not realising that other countries have progressed further so that they are somewhat shocked to hear the kind of searching questions others ask, but then occasionally national pride has encouraged readers to be more critical than the case deserves - they have forgotten their own vulnerability.

It can hardly be overemphasised how pervasive national culture and assumptions can be in the compilation of the case, in its interpretation and evaluation, concepts of the nature of education itself vary from country to country so that the idea of 'elementary education', for instance, must be carefully and thoroughly explained before discussants fly off into abstract debate in which individual values are skated over. We have tried as far as possible to be aware of this but the problems between people who share the same mother tongue can be even greater than between those who speak different

languages. One way to avoid this problem is to examine not so much the case itself as the values and concepts that are raised by the case - with a constant moving between the levels of abstraction and concreteness.

In spite of this, some cultural differences are more apparent than real. Administrative behaviour, for instance, tends to follow remarkably similar basic patterns whether a country be centralised or localised; that is, bureaucrats are bureaucrats wherever they are. 'Comprehensive' may have different meanings in national nomenclature but no one confuses 'comprehensive' with 'selective' education. People themselves also behave in remarkably similar ways and it comes sometimes as a surprise to discover that teachers in other schools feel just the same as we do about the same sort of problems. For some people, the most important revelation about cases is their closeness to their own situation.

However, this is to speak of the situation in general. Quite clearly national differences are very real in particular and specific cases and the viewpoint of another country is a valuable way of seeing the significance of the differences. Each country sees its problems in its own way and the interplay of issues takes on a national distinction. Hence in some countries political issues predominate, in others social, in yet others economic factors and so on. The danger is that a given country may value certain issues as against others and ignore the relevance of others. In the international seminar people can give forceful arguments for their taking another view of things and one can be made to realise not only that there are different ways of looking at a situation but that there are different ways of describing the elements that make up the issues and hence more openings for finding situations. In other words, in the international seminar problems are brought out into the open that have lain hidden

deny the other perspective, as being inapplicable - "if you really knew our situation, you would know that isn't possible - further discussion can be opened up by the other non-nationals simply seeking far more explanation and information.

It goes almost without saying that it is absolutely essential for the general climate of an international seminar to be open, supportive and friendly. In practice, many people arrive feeling defensive or aggressive about their own country, ready to defend before even the sign of attack. This is a natural reaction to an unfamiliar situation which is common enough in ordinary courses and conferences let alone international ones where there will always be political overtones. The social-psychology is a natural study in itself and at this point we can do little more to refer to it as an element in conference culture. Our experience would suggest, however, that the use of a case is a means of defusing potential conflict situations because issues focus closely on the case study rather than more diffuse issues, and disagreements can be contained on an intellectual and cerebral level without too much emotion being generated.

Because many questions of clarification and fact arise in the discussion of the case, the early stages of analysis usually take a gentle, low key tone which does much to ease the anxieties of the presenting country members. From time to time an individual will be blunt or rude but it is very seldom that an outright attack is made upon the innovation described - and if it is, the critic has probably shown other problems of relationship which isolate him from his fellow countrymen. Some of these 'elementary' questions can be the most searching because they touch the very roots of administrative assumptions - the role of the American Superintendent or the Scottish Director of Education are cases in point. Since course members need to know basic facts, the questioning about roles and status, goals and objectives,

values and assumptions often reach the heart of the matter not because the questioners are brilliantly analytical but because as quite ordinary educators they need to know how one innovation relates to their own understanding of educational change. Some of the most perceptive comments about, for example, open plan schools have come from teachers working at the practical level rather than academics concerned with high theory.

Our use of case studies has been on conferences with practitioners and not with students in training. Hence members' experience is exceedingly varied; some are school and classroom practitioners concerned with the daily running of education face to face with the pupil and student; others are administrators from all levels of the system; yet others are trainers and theoreticians. By no means is everybody involved in innovation at the present time. Hence there are many levels of understanding. Teachers may experience difficulty with the general abstractions of the academics; academics may fail to understand the realities of the classroom; trainers may feel uncomfortably in the middle while administrators may be blinkered by a too impersonal bureaucratic view of things. The hope is that they will all come together and chip away at one another's biases. In this regard the role of course tutors and consultants becomes important allied to the way the conference is split up into work groups or 'family' groups. Group tutors cannot afford to be didactic or missionary but have the task of creating a good working climate, provocative yet conciliatory, comfortable yet intellectually aware - but here we are on the familiar ground of the qualities of the good teacher. We have found that only if there is an atmosphere of true collaboration with the conference members all considered to be equals can good, perceptive, critical, analytical work be achieved; any attempts to bludgeon or force people into an attitude favourable to a particular innovation is

sure to fail. An interesting aspect, however, of the mixture of people with different status in their own countries, is that the international conference is a great leveller. A high bureaucrat is soon put in his place by a teacher from another country; a superintendent and a politician find they aren't even interested in one another's back home status; an academic and a practitioner find they can discuss as equals an innovation that would have polarised them in their home country. All of which indicates that status problems may be a larger factor in free discussion of back home problems that we often give attention to. Perhaps the international setting is necessary if there is to be genuinely free discussion.

The term 'case study' is one of those generalised terms much used in education that can cover a multitude of quite different ideas. The core meaning appears to be some form of presentation about an organisational or administrative situation which is followed by a discussion and analysis. There are a number of ways in which this may be done and one of the issues in our experience has been over the teaching attached to the learning process - that is to say, whether it was necessary to have 'tutors' who would try to ensure that learning should take a particular form and be based on some clear academic principles as with traditional case study teaching in the major business schools. On the whole, we decided that the tutor role would be facilitative rather than didactic on the assumption that there was enough experience and expertise in the groups as a whole to ensure member satisfaction with the learning involved. At all the seminars there were people with international reputations who we used as resource people but the essential quality of the seminar was bringing people together to make their own positive contributions rather than to be 'taught by experts'.

Various forms of presentation and examination of cases were used but the essential format was (1) some pre-reading of written material, (2) a presentation by those involved in the innovation, (3) discussion in small groups, (4) some form of recording of findings. We should like to consider here the various kinds of study open to us, though not all have been practical or possible.

All cases represent a slice in time of an organisation or innovation. There is probably no way of isolating an event from its pre-and post-history. Indeed one of the difficulties is

knowing when an innovation began and when it ended. There seem to be two common developments to innovations - either they fail or are abandoned, or they are reformed in a sort of counter-innovation. Hence it is always difficult to know what phase of an innovation to deal with. Most innovations that we used appeared to be in a healthy stage of development but that was because the international context of our situation seemed to call for contemporaneous innovation. We need to consider the use of completed innovations as a learning resource. At any rate, our choice of a time-slice is significant in itself because it has implications for the analysis of the case in that we may unconsciously have excluded essential information.

Sometimes cases are presented phase by phase over a period of time in such a way that analysis of one part must be analysed subsequently in the light of further information. This would appear to be a useful teaching method were it not for the fact that phased case studies tend to be far too bulky and the writers tend to contrive what happens so that the issues have been predetermined. It is almost a dishonest way of teaching though fairly widely practised in management teaching. Our concern was not to lead on with adulterated information because our objective was to increase our understanding as much as that of our fellow seminarists and we felt that going to and fro through a case was a more creative way than moving on from artificial phase to artificial phase. It was also felt that information about the situation in which the case was embedded should be freely available at the outset, and essential information should not be withheld for the sake of the 'game'.

Probably one of the most useful forms of case study is the incident study when a single incident has to be discussed without the need to refer to too much surrounding information. But again this is good teaching method like the 'in-tray' exercises where the student has to respond to a specific

problem in the form of a letter, memo. or communication that has come into his in-tray. The nearest we got to this was the isolating of 'critical incidents' in the innovations themselves but this was the product of analysis not presentation. Our interest was not to present seminar members with simple problems but to help them to analyse situations comprised of a complex sequence of inter-related events.

The cases we used were real in that they were accounts of what was believed to have actually occurred. There is some merit in using cases that have been made up but only if they are romantic fiction. Where there is a pretence at realism this falls flat as patently dishonest but a subjective, romanticised account of an event which is also clearly known as such as the merit of raising issues in free uninhibited discussion. While we all had our fantasies about the cases we used, the method of realistic fiction was not used by us simply because the availability of real national cases was much more useful to our purposes.

We attempted to present all the cases, even the smaller ones which participants brought with them and consisted of a few pages, as general ones and not oriented to one discipline or perspective. In actuality this is not possible; all educational innovations have a pedagogic bias and political, economic and social overtones predominate. But we were anxious not to have 'political' cases; or sociological cases because we were keen to use the multivariable responses of seminar participants. Of course, people tended to exhibit role perspectives - teachers saw things from a teacher's viewpoint, administrators from an administrative, academics from a theoretical and trainers tried to look at them from every point of view but their own. In this way both presentation and analysis were hopefully comprehensive and all-embracing, at least in theory. Far clearly certain issues did dominate and a

correct analysis required an understanding of the balance of factors.

Our hope was always to provide a comment-free presentation and analysis but in the event the biases in presentation proved generally to be an asset in analysis because it provided a fair starting point for discussion. Where the presenters spoke of their innovation as 'successful' the obvious question was 'how do you know it was successful?' Where the presenting group spoke of the issues as not being financial a leading question concerned a comparison of costs of the innovative and non-innovative situations. Naturally, too, member bias was apparent in discussion since everyone has preferences for areas of discussion and classes of causes.

The presentation of a case is often followed by a number of questions students might ask about the situation. Generally speaking we did not do this but preferred to leave the discussion open. In some cases this was a weakness because it allowed some people to dominate the discussion groups, left areas of concern to chance picking up, and may have confused less academic people who wanted clearer lines to work along. How much dependence the teacher creates is a large pedagogic question and for us the answer had to centre round the degree of trust we had in our colleagues and our unwillingness to dominate not only the seminars but the kind and quality of thinking that went on there. We had no doubt about the collegeality of our learning.

Presentation of cases during a seminar presents problems of boredom and fatigue. There must be variety in presentation and we achieved this with major cases. All the usual methods of presentation were used - videotapes, transparencies, overhead projectors, wall displays, films and dramatisation. The difficulty with a lively presentation is that it is the mode of presentation that receives the discussion not the content of the case. Furthermore, the presentation highlights some issues at the expense of others and this was certainly the case with our major

"Anatomy of Educational Innovation"⁽ⁿ⁾ if only because the whole was far too large for any presentation other than a complete reading of the book. Also open to our use were simulations, games and experiential situations but we used them only on one course in addition to the straight case studies. Their use as adjuncts to case histories has yet to be explored and it would be our hope to draw on experiences elsewhere to examine the implications of experiential learning (also n below) in an international setting - a situation we view with some caution at the present time though we feel that some useful developments can be expected during the next year or so.

(n) Smith, Louis M & Keith, Pat M: Anatomy of Educational Innovation: An Organisational Analysis of an elementary school
John Wiley & Son, N.Y. 1971.

Case Studies have to be written or compiled with some framework, some objectives and some purposes in mind. Anyone who has thumbed through a book of case studies or incident studies has experienced the frustration of not being able to find anything suitable. And it is no use asking someone just to write a case study without telling them why it is required - for whom and for what purpose. So every case study is constructed according to some sort of model and guidelines even if these are only imperfectly perceived by the writer. Thus there are a number of ways in which cases may be described which will greatly influence the way they are used since the utility of a case is directly related to the congruence between the construction model and the analytical model.

The commonest models for cases are the closed and open systems models. The closed system model assumes that the case episode is isolated and can be discussed in itself and without reference to other environmental factors. In all likelihood the view of organisation and innovations is that of a closed episode in which behaviour is either effective or ineffective. Development within the episode is sequential but not necessarily relational. The open systems model takes a different view because the boundaries around the episode will be seen as open and permeable and relationships are seen as causal as well as sequential. The use of open-systems models to describe organisations is now almost universal as a means of analysis though there are a number of considerable objections to the oversimplification to which they seem almost inevitably to be reduced. Whichever model the case writer uses, he inserts categories of behaviour into the model and ensures that he provides information about it which the case reader is expected to pick up. Thus if he uses an open-systems model with feedback loop (which is the commonest type)⁽ⁿ⁾ and

includes the reward system as an element he will provide information about the consequences of the failure of the innovation to provide adequate rewards for its members. The advantage of an open-systems model is that it shows relationships, causes and modifications in a systematic inter-relational way. On the other hand, a closed-systems model tends towards the check list of aspects of organisational functioning. This is not so bad as open-systems enthusiasts would suggest since often perceived relationships are spurious and the examination of cause and effect can become exceedingly tangled. Closed system models may be more open to interpretation but from a learning point of view (since the 'truth' can never be known only speculated upon) interpretation may provide a better basis for behavioural change than the intellectual understanding of a complex model. There may be a tendency for an open-systems model to give all elements parity as against the closed systems model giving undue importance to one strand in the innovation.

The simplest model from a learning/teaching point of view is mono-disciplinary. That is, it takes a clear economic or political or sociological view of the case episode and deals with it from that point of view alone. There is much to be said for this approach. At least the perspective is clear and the ensuing analysis and discussion can be clearly focused without hedge-hopping around other issues. It is a way of concentrating the mind though the advantage is to those who have the appropriate intellectual discipline while the others are left out. Nevertheless, because attention is focused within the mono-disciplinary area the debate itself cannot easily be initiated by introducing irrelevant perspectives. - at least, that is the theoretical position.

In practice, most case studies are multi-disciplinary, or, to put it unkindly, just mixed up. It is impossible for a single writer

to keep all the elements in balance and the task for a team of writers is not justified by the use the study is put to. Case Studies run the risk of requiring much more of the writers than the users and it is the writers who seem to be the main beneficiaries. It is a great temptation to aim at comprehensiveness only to be frustrated by the impossible - because data is unavailable at the time of writing, or the writer is carried away by some interest or enthusiasm, or the narrative comes out of skew as one facet is developed so that no place can be found to fit other events in; time, too, has a way of passing quickly in the writing. Complexity often leads to obtuseness and if the situation is really complex then diary notes from one actor or an imaginative narrative by another will serve just as well. For one thing is quite certain, only too often what passes for comprehensiveness in the eyes of the writer appears as absolute confusion to the reader.

One method that we used, quite successfully it would appear, was to give outline instructions to writers of what came to be called Management Analysis Papers or M.A.P.s. These included a description of the kind of points it was felt one could expect to be raised with at the end a summary of points or issues which favoured and/or disfavoured the innovation. The idea of the pro's and con's was that of a Force Field Analysis but, as those who have experienced this technique know, it is decidedly difficult to give any quantification of 'field forces' and such exercises to quantify the unquantifiable are best avoided. Nevertheless, having to ask the questions 'How strong do you feel this influence was and what did it assist and what prevent', was a useful starting point in analysis and a helpful pointer in the compilation of the study.

The use of a model appeals to the neat and tidy mind; perhaps one already closed to issues and there is certainly the danger that

some writers believe they have everything neatly sewn up. Since it was the expectation that case writers were as much in the learning situation as case readers anything which impeded learning was to be avoided. Unhappily, there was strong resistance of many case writers to learning about their own case and a case writer may even have a ready answer - "Well, I think I can assure you that your point didn't apply in this instance."

So in some ways, a narrative and historical account of what happened in the innovation may well have been as good as the attempted technical accounts we asked for on at least one of the seminars. It is, of course, another question as to whether many people have the narrative and descriptive skills to outline the history of an episode in which they have been involved. Selective perception and selective memory are but two of the problems. Writing is itself a considerable skill and so is the ability to order ideas in ways which represent the author's own view of things. Few people can properly separate fact and fantasy yet are often more convinced of the truth of a falsely remembered incident than the correctness of a neutral yet crucial development. At least these are the kinds of issues in narrative writing. Yet in some ways fiction is more useful than the varnished "truth".

In the process of compiling the case study, the writer may be acting as intermediary and not as one of the actual participants. Additionally, the writer might be relying on researchers to provide him with information and all these filters provide opportunities for distortion. In some ways this is unimportant provided the users (the tutors) acknowledge that the case in no way represents the real event. The intellectual dishonesty arises when the 'teacher' believes the case to be reality and hence also that his interpretation is an understanding of the reality. This caution, of course, represents a phenomenological view of the use of case studies but an important one in the international context because

most seminar members will have very little experience of other national contexts yet they are expecting and are expected to 'understand' the cases under review. And one of the crunches comes when the participants in the case discount the arguments of the other seminar members by such statements as, "Yes, but things don't work like that in our country."

There are four major danger areas in the constructing of case studies which deserve our attention. The first is biased perspectives in selecting material; we have discussed that at some length but it is an insoluble problem with any kind of reportage and in a sense, the recognition of it is the best defence against it. The second is omissions either unconscious or deliberate which lead to a falsification of the material presented. There is no defence against this because one cannot discuss what is not present at all and the exercise of asking about possible omissions appears obstructionist if not destructive. And the truth is, most people are quite unaware that they have missed out the most important facts, ideas or incidents if only because the most obvious are most easily taken for granted and the most threatening the most liable to suppression. The third danger is bias towards certain answers and solutions for a whole host of possible reasons. Few participants in innovative episodes like to feel they cannot entirely understand what is going on so everyone has an explanation. The need to explain always precedes the willingness to analyse hence explanations are more common than reasons and the understanding of causes. In any case, the study itself was doubtless chosen because it illustrates some particular theories and this is decided before the case has been examined. Just occasionally it does happen that the selected case turns out to be quite inappropriate for its purpose and so it becomes an embarrassment rather than a new opportunity. The fourth danger springs from the need to give 'closure' to events and incidents. As explained earlier innovations

do not have discrete beginnings and endings and the selection of a case is almost impossible without leaving loose ends either side. But because people like neatness, writers often wrap the case up with a nice sense of finality when closure is just not a feature of the case. In this connection it is worth remembering the concept of the counter-innovation which represents the reaction against the innovation to bring it into line or consolidate it into the system; often this is a distinct but related episode (e.g. the change of Heads at Countesthorpe). If the writer or tutor has a need to bring the case to closure, it is more likely that he has made quite specific judgements about the event; in this case he should be wary of imposing his judgments and evaluations on his students and colleagues.

IV Analysis of Case Studies

Much of this section relates closely to the previous one on the compilation of cases. At least the two processes of compilation and analysis should have a relationship, though it would be a dangerous assumption that because a study has been compiled on the basis of one model, the analysis must proceed according to the same model. This would be at variance with good academic practice. But the basic issue of analysis is the reconciling of the different perspectives and needs in the study group and since almost invariably groups have leaders, the nominated leader must decide on his role - facilitator, teacher or colleague. In this situation they are not compatible.

A mono-disciplinary analysis is clearly the easiest provided there is a good general understanding of that discipline in the study group, otherwise there are important issues of group dynamics - status, authority, leadership, decision making. Even with one discipline like politics or sociology, it is unlikely that there will be much agreement but the debate can proceed on agreed terms for the rules of the discipline are understood. In the end there may even be conciliation and agreement though it is likely more of the discussion will have been about the theories of the discipline than the realities of the case.

A multi-disciplinary approach is more difficult though easier in one way for the leader - he can avoid taking sides. The problems with the multi-disciplinary approach is to find some common ground. Even agreement on differences would be an achievement but too often agreements take place on conflicting premises. In any case some of the concepts within a discipline are not easily compatible with similar concepts in other disciplines - for example the idea of contract in law, economics, sociology and psychology. In any case, in analysis a facile discussion of issues and anecdotal discussion like 'He shouldn't have done that -

now what I did when I was in a similar position was -- ". The analysis must be academically reputable and analytical schema are very tricky things to handle - for instance the concept of power relationships cannot be dismissed in a five minute interchange. The purpose of case analysis is not just to respond to the situation described but to examine the theoretical explanations for behaviour and events. Thus, for example, when an issue of interpersonal relationships arises there will be some quite clear theoretical explanations in social-psychology. Whether these are the same or not as explanations in economics or politics is an issue for debate but not a reason for ignoring an examination of the socio-psychological perspective in order to gain insight from at least one valid perspective. In this process the temptation to offer opinions rather than developed rational explanations has to be resisted.

One approach to case studies may be termed "comprehensive" because some people try to reach a complete understanding of everything in the innovation. That just is not possible and the analysis generates into a turgid exchange of opinions. A case requires only one clear insight to be justified in its use and it is a pity that some people try to squeeze more from the situation than is really in it. Comprehensive analyses on the scale of a short seminar cannot be mounted or defended and in our experience there was no need to worry cases to death just for the sake of looking at it from all points of view.

A fruitful approach to analysis is what might be termed the parametric. In this approach a number of critical issues or parameters are offered as a basis for discussion and exploration. These may be used as a kind of check list of aspects or facets of the innovation but the difficulty is in relating them to one another. Of course, inter-relationships are problematical anyway and systems models do not deal with this issue

satisfactorily. It may be that relationships are less important than is sometimes suggested because an individual's conceptual models may be erroneously based. The difficulty with all models is that they tend to be too simple or else unmanageable.

Already on several occasions comment has been made about the anecdotal response to cases. Many practitioners find it difficult to deal in general conceptualising and they tend to generalise their particularities and particularise when generalities are required. In other words, many teachers have to be induced gently into ways of conceptual thinking. For this reason, the use of personal reminiscences and anecdotes is a means of achieving security in the group and there is no reason why personal anecdotes cannot be used also to develop theoretical concepts. At least to retail an anecdote is a positive response. Further, it is sometimes only possible to explain a hypothesis by illustrating it with an incident. What has to be avoided, however, is the continual swapping of anecdotes, merely capping one story with another. Sometimes academics who have themselves been floored by the case study, have recourse to story telling and perhaps sometimes the stories are more insightful than the theories.

Most groups have a need for an expert, a guru. The group leader can all too easily fall to the temptation to offer what is wanted, though not needed. We are all flattered when listened to and have to resist the urge to dominate the group. There are no clear cut "answers" to case studies only informed and intelligent discussion in which all can take part equally because that is the learning process that we have most valued. This is not to say that individuals cannot make analyses and share them with the group; indeed, that is to be encouraged. But the nature of case learning is based on mutual sharing of explanations and interpretations and no one can be permitted to become know-all to the group.

There are a number of methods by which the analysis process may be achieved. Individuals may make an analysis and present it to the group; the group members may work in sub-groups or groups themselves might join together after some initial work. A tutor might take the group through an analysis procedure according to his preferred 'teaching style', or 'experts' may be imported into the group to facilitate analysis. In the end individuals will only learn in proportion to what they put into the process but the climate of the group ought to be such as to encourage participation, not deny it. As part of this process, or additional to it, an expert, authority or member of the innovation under discussion may provide an analysis for the group but there has sometimes been an interesting tendency for a case writer to attempt a final and conclusive summing up in terms of his presentation of the case even though general discussion had made clear that some of his interpretations and perceptions had been erroneous (in that he admitted to other possibilities). In a quite serious way such, and similar, attempts to bring finality can undo a good deal of sympathetic work that has been done by other study group members.

It is most unlikely that there can be any planning of further action in the case studies we have discussed because although many of our cases were of innovations still in the development stage, they had all completed certain critical stages in their development. Hence the necessary exercise was an additional one, that of examining the nature of the new situation. In practice this was an opportunity we did not take and were unable to take because these were early days of theory building for all of us. But there can be no doubt that the next, and present, stage to latch onto is the ongoing aspect of the innovation and work not so much on prediction (which everyone would like but which is a very dangerous practice) as our dealing with the situation in the here

and now. This will in itself require the development of a whole range of new techniques and approaches, not necessarily the obvious one of Organisation Development or Curriculum Development that have been much discussed in education everywhere. It seems likely that new developments in our teaching programme will be a search for helping skills rather than analytical ones.

themselves, or colleagues of theirs, are the presenters there is the double problem of partisanship and over-reaction in defence against attack. It is very difficult for students to be honest and open when they are face to face with those involved since almost any "critique" is liable to be interpreted as criticism and even constructive suggestions have an implied superiority. Yet the temptation to defend has to be faced up to if the discussion is to be a real learning situation. What is passed has happened and cannot be undone but future situations will have to be faced and true experience leads to adaptability. While real cases are open to the debating of false issues, they are discussed in a context that provides additional information and it is a legitimate use of studies to use this resource in order to 'go beyond' the presented case, even to tackling head on the biases and partisanship evident in the selection and presentation of material.

Related to partisanship in which the presenters may be doing little more than offer a justification for their own strategies and approaches, are the biases of the students and teachers examining the case. It is only too easy to adopt an ideological approach which is not appropriate. So some cases may be presented as a justification for a centralised system or a decentralised one and the students may take an opposing view and attack from an ideological point of view without engaging the proper intellectual analysis. Equally, a teacher may prefer a particular analytical model or paradigm and insist on a basis of approach which is irrelevant but suits his position or discipline. Thus economic models may be used instead of political ones and political ones instead of sociological. When there are dominant members of study groups their personalistic approaches are a considerable danger and groups are often unable to deal with the situation unless there is careful leadership from trained case consultants. In the IMTEC²⁸ case, the internationalism of the chosen staff members was generally an adequate safeguard against,

Issues in the Use of Case Studies

In this section we shall draw together at the risk of repetition some of the major issues that arise out of our use and experience of cases. We shall be critical of what we have done because we are anxious not to become complacent about using a technique that can become very automatic and obscure a whole multitude of learning and teaching problems. We see the use of cases as an essentially teaching and research approach which can give insight into the problems of management but which does not of itself provide management skills. Of course, skills cannot be learned without insights but the learning of insights and skills require two different processes even if in some circumstances these processes can go on side by side. We are concerned with two types of learning - cognitive and affective⁽ⁿ⁾. There can be no doubt that one of the unresolved problems of management education is the dichotomy between intellectual understanding and behavioural competence. The situation is complicated because teachers of management are not always good managers themselves but expect their students to be. On our courses we tried to have no 'teachers' but this was wishing for the moon. Even when intellectually a person has understood the problems of a case study, there is no certainty that the situation would be much changed if he could have his time over again. It is no doubt particularly fortunate, that in regard to innovations at least, history never repeats itself.

People tend to take sides very quickly when discussing a case doubtless because they wish to defend their own behaviour which they see reflected in the case. This is especially so with incident studies when the temptation to give a quick, forthright solution is very great. In case studies where the original participants

(n) To use two of Bloom's terms without being necessarily committed to his definitions.

at least, parochialism and narrowness of thinking.

Not only specific to international seminars but also to others where several academic disciplines are involved are differences of usage and meaning. Printed usages are more open to observation and caution their colloquialisms in speech - for instance in American English "it went like a bomb" means "it was a disaster" while in U.K. English it means "it was an enormous success". Phrases slipped out in speech can be passed by without being caught while the printed word can be retrieved. Sometimes, considerable misunderstandings arise from linguistic usage and these are compounded when some group members have less than complete command of the language. Closely allied are cultural differences and these were noted over such terms as 'open school', comprehensive school, grammar school, gymnasium and of course the English eccentricity and perversity of calling 'private' schools 'public' schools. Sometimes 'elementary education' has widely differing connotations and many facts of education are just not known or remembered such as the age of starting school. The Norwegian term '9 year school', or Swedish 'folkskule' are examples of terms which can only be understood from an experience base rather than a dictionary definition. If educational cultural differences from country to country are not well understood yet taken for granted by nationals (the English and Americans tend to assume everyone knows all about their educational systems!), political systems are even less well understood. Even when a system can be explained - and politics are too full of cultural nuances ever to be understood simply by definition - its significance can seldom be grasped by a foreigner. Yet most educational systems are expressions of political systems in a remarkable way since they express the central political ideologies. The decentralised English system is a case in point since it amounts almost to a laissez-faire attitude of live and let live and compromise rather than

a closely defined legal separation of powers. This makes it difficult for Englishmen to understand the centralised Norwegian system as against the centralised Swedish and the German State systems as compared with the Dutch religious divisions. This often means that case discussions hover on the edge of being political discussions (and certainly they concern themselves with political issues) rather than looking for academic disciplines to seek analytical models. In centralised systems, for instance, political issues have greater salience than in decentralised systems where sociological perspectives are more obviously relevant. Since emotions are strongly involved in political issues, it is not always easy to adopt a neutral and uncommitted approach to issues where a complexity of political issues is evident or even partly submerged.

There is no such thing as a complete case study or a complete case. It is not just a matter of the difficulty of deciding when a case begins and when it ends, but to choose appropriate perimeters within which to contain the study. All human events take place in a social context and the whole of life is present as background to every case studied. The mere act of selecting material and content for a study is an act of evaluation and interpretation. Clearly when the participants write the study their selection is interpretatively significant but even an outsider who has been chosen for his impartiality must select and in so doing exercises his judgement and evaluates relevance. Though this incompleteness is quite obvious, the implication is that there may not only be more to uncover if one digs down deep enough but that the best way to understand the case may be to understand what surrounds it, in the way that a naughty child can only be understood if his parents and family are understood. The danger of incompleteness is that techniques of analysis may also betray into a quite wrong interpretation of the situation and so the learning is false learning because the situation as

seen by the students was not the situation that actually obtained. It would be difficult to know to what extent this happened on the INTEC courses, but it certainly happened with some cases. Those that were brief and lacked back-up resources such as participants and additional data. But then misinterpretation is possible with even the most richly provided case.

Associated with incompleteness is the retrospective nature of nearly all cases, few cases are written while they are happening and, therefore, they are a recollection of and reflection on what has (or is believed to have) occurred. Sometimes this can quite distort the time sequence of events or the salience of certain events; there is already a strong element of explanation in the writing. There is no way of avoiding this other than by the most careful attention to diaries and records yet many innovations are not well recorded in this way since almost by nature an innovation does not fall into established recording patterns unless it be a bureaucratic innovation or the result of long political campaigning. In the very process of its development an innovation sets down new lines of progress but it may also use the structures already existing but imbue them with new meaning. In this way, a Director of Education may appear to be the key figure in an innovation whereas in reality it is his deputy's son whose response to the present system throws up its deficiencies.

It is an understatement to say that case studies are difficult to write, though a well-written one appears deceptively so. All writing about real life involves selection of material but cases require the skill of the detective novel. For not only has the writer to have a clear paradigm in his own mind for construction but he must also plant enough clues to lead the reader to wish to examine the evidence. This is not to say that the INTEC cases were works of fictional narrative nor that they were simply teaching party tricks, anecdotes intended to catch the

unwary student out. It is just impossible to write an account of a sequence of events without giving some limits of what is to follow as the writer becomes aware of the need. For these are case histories in the proper (and almost clinical) sense of the word. They were what actually happened and in that way were quite unique. This raises problems of abstractedness, generalisation and extrapolation. If a studied case is unique and distinct, what generalisations are possible, what level of abstract thought can be applied and what inferences can be legitimately made from it? It raises, too, the level of abstractness with which students themselves can cope, since some students (especially teachers) find generalised abstractions most difficult to deal with. Teachers often appear to call for concreteness when they need generalised principles and to shy away from practical detail by calling for generalised theories. This is a hazard of teaching management theories to teachers but a real problem nonetheless. How does this apply to any situation? The teacher cries but seldom waits to have it explained why. A reason for this may be the rich complexity of the teaching situation which can never be properly organised so that events can be predicted. Yet a value of studying cases is to discover if there is any predictability and the management teacher assumption is that there certainly is. But how can learning be transferred from an understanding of the case to behaviour in a new and 'real' situation? There is empirical evidence that little transference takes place at all; the individual who is good at case studies is not always good at management (and, of course, vice versa). There really is a very real problem here for it asks the most basic question of all about the use of case studies - what effect does learning from case studies have on the behaviour of the individual? Of course, other means of learning have been used on all the IMTEC courses, but the case study does appear to give a cognitive framework for discussion and analysis and in questioning previously held views,

interpretations and opinions must provide something of that essential shock to the individual that is necessary before experiential learning or even further cognitive learning can commence.

The awareness of the two different levels of learning is essential if unrealistic optimism about the case study approach is not allowed to cloud the issue, and the good as well as bad points about case studies. Changed behaviour is the result not only of cognitive learning but affective or emotional learning. Affective learning alone is necessary for changed behaviour but for that behaviour to be rational and subject to rationality there must be a parallel cognitive learning. The study of the case provides some of that cognitive learning, especially if theoretical models are used to explain the case. This cognitive learning should also help the student to make greater sense of his previous experience and to be able to develop adequate mental schema to use in the analysis of fresh and similar problems. Cognition also provides a common-frame of reference for intellectual discussion and the study of the case itself is an effective experience as well as a cognitive one. With this in mind we cannot claim too much for the use of international cases but it has been clear that they provide a stimulating base for intellectual and experiential exchange in a way nothing else would appear to do in the inter-cultural setting.

Where students have a high level of expertise, are highly educated and experienced in the matter of the case studies, groups can handle a case very satisfactorily unaided even by writers and participants. But there are a number of situations in which students will require assistance and here the problem of instructor dependence and interpretation becomes crucial. In the INTEC seminars there was always enough skill and professional expertise available but when the cases are published and used elsewhere there will be the serious issue of the

students being very much dependent on the instructor for their interpretation. When the 'instructor' does not even know the country in which the innovation took place, the consequences can be grave indeed.

In many ways, the case study is a highly sophisticated approach to learning. Certainly many of the IMTEC cases were well documented and imaginatively presented as well as dealing with almost all levels and depths of innovation. The key to the use of cases is the process of analysis and this requires a research skill to sense out what models, paradigms and theoretical concepts most usefully relate to the case and multifarious incidents therein. Many students cannot cope with the apparent haphazardness of selection of an analytical approach. Although there was a sort of 'IMTEC model'⁽ⁿ⁾ of change - no one could use this slavishly to examine each and every case and all the parts and facets of it. Yet to many there must seem to be a disconcerting fickleness even whimsicality, about the choice of analytical procedures and since this is the essence of management there is no way of avoiding this intuitive approach. Furthermore, it requires a level of conceptualisation that many students are inexperienced in. As innovators ourselves we tend to gaze at the top of the trees, forgetting that our colleagues are stumbling among the roots.

Something has already been said about emotional, effective and experiential learning. The case study itself is basically an intellectual tool and ways to supplement the learning have to be discovered. One way of doing this was by means of what we called a 'mini-university' which was simply a programme of learning experiences ranging from lectures to a kind of socio-drama. The hope would be to extend such a programme but the difficulty is that the language and cultural differences become so much more sharply differentiated that in the international context they are not really practical - the lecture is the 'safest' international learning situation and the case study makes a real advance towards a

shared experience.

Sometimes the case study becomes almost an end in itself in that students become so preoccupied with their discussion, sharing explanations and scoring points that they forget that the purpose of the study is to gain understanding of a situation and to translate that understanding with their own experience. And sometimes, too, people become obsessed with their own explanation and interpretative schemata. Again, there is a temptation to blame the actors in the case or to apportion blame among them - to say simply what was 'wrong' rather than to extrapolate general principles. These errors of approach spring in a way from one of the strengths of the case-study approach - the immediacy of the situations concerned. And occasionally this very immediacy is the cause of the blind spot because some part of the studies catches the imagination and the whole is missed with the singular preoccupation. Yet even this may be an advantage if it is genuinely vicarious experience with learning involved.

Related to this problem is the danger of identification when a student or group of students identify so closely that they themselves are part of the case. Such apparent realism is really a fantasy for they have created a manageable world in their imagination in which to act out some of their unexpressed problems. There are a number of psychological problems like this and we have concerned ourselves with none of them because of their considerable intractability. These case studies are not the occasion for depth studies in the psychology of individuals involved in innovation though this is an area we shall have in due course to become concerned with. Romanticising is certainly a danger in the use of cases but the IMTEC context has always had a strong element of earthiness and commonsense because so high a proportion of seminar members have been practitioners who if they do dream, dream without the presence of theoreticians.

A remaining problem that does not lie within the province of IMTEC *activity* is the application of learning to the back home situation. This is always a problem with all courses but with international courses it is a particularly frustrating situation. Members attend in such small national numbers and are at such a distance that follow up is virtually impossible and taking action can hardly be understood by those who stayed at home. But then case studies are an exercise that prepares the mind for fresh things and the back home situation is where the fresh things occur. None of us can leave our experiences completely behind us and all our future actions have much of the past within them.